



Winter 2020–2021

CITIZEN CONNECTIONS

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Greetings, and welcome to the winter edition of *Citizen Connections*, the e-newsletter of the National Citizen Review Panel community. Here you will find federal and state updates, information about our upcoming webinars, and a story about Maine's recent strategic planning session.

FEDERAL UPDATES FROM THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU

I want to start by extending my best wishes to you and your families and my hope that you have been able to stay safe and healthy. During these uncertain times, efforts to support families and to prevent child maltreatment and exposure to trauma are more important than ever, including the work of Citizen Review Panels (CRPs). We truly appreciate the CRPs' insights and recommendations to ensure child protective services (CPS) are working effectively with children and families to achieve positive outcomes. To further support the work, I want to make sure you are aware of some resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic that may be helpful to you and your partners. [The Administration for Children and Families](#) and the [Children's Bureau](#) have each compiled information in a centralized location on their websites.

In addition, [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) has dedicated part of its site to COVID-19 state child welfare and related health resources and lists those resources by state. The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute also offers a wealth of resources, including a [webinar series](#) to support the virtual workforce. Recognizing these are challenging times for all, it is important to remember that self-care isn't an addition to the work but must be considered part of the work. Please make sure to take time to pause,



breathe, and do something (e.g., take a walk, talk with a friend, etc.) to take care of yourself.

I also want to recognize how pleased we are to be working with the Capacity Building Center for States (the Center for States) to continue to support CRPs. This partnership allows us to further benefit from the expertise of Dr. Blake Jones. We believe this partnership will result in more effective distribution of relevant information and resources to the CRP community, as well innovative strategies to foster increased peer sharing opportunities. Please be patient with us during this transition, and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Lastly, I wanted to wish you, "Happy New Fiscal Year!" The start of a fiscal year offers new opportunities, including forecasts for anticipated funding opportunities in fiscal year 2021. The best resource to search for forecasted funding opportunities is www.grants.gov. To find those forecasted by the Children's Bureau, search by agency (look for Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau).

This is also a time where we announce new grant awards. Discretionary grants recently awarded include the National Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Courts, Quality Improvement Center on Family Reunification, and Tribal Title IV-E Development Grants (standing announcement). More information on these grant awards can be viewed [here](#).

Thank you again for all of your work and dedication to CRPs. We truly appreciate your partnership in working to achieve positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Julie Fliss,
Children's Bureau's Office on Child Abuse and Neglect

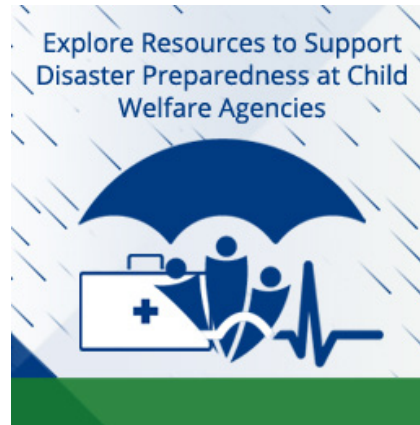


"I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love."

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MOTHER TERESA

RESOURCES FOR DISASTER PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS



Read the *Children's Bureau Express* article "[Building the Capacity to Pivot: Planning for Future Disasters](#)" to explore strategies for responding to disaster-related challenges in child welfare and learn how states can integrate disaster planning into

regular federal planning processes.

Visit [Building Capacity for Disaster Preparedness at a Child Welfare Agency](#) for more resources.

STATE UPDATES

Wisconsin

The county-based CRPs in Wisconsin continue to meet digitally every month. The new format seems to be working fairly well, although the panels miss in-person meetings. Overall, the panels are increasing their focus on reducing racial disparities in the system and supporting families through the pandemic. The CRPs plan to have an annual meeting in the fall and hear about how the state will implement the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The presentation will be followed by small and large group discussions on the FFPSA in Minnesota.

Ohio

The Ohio CRPs are beginning another year of work (virtually)! Each panel met in August via Zoom conference to begin the work of gathering and reviewing the latest research and updates related to their topics. Each of Ohio's five panels is making plans for rigorous data collection with help from partnering individuals from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, local public child welfare agencies, The Ohio State University, and the University of Michigan School of Social Work. The new virtual platform for CRP meetings has not affected the members' passion for advocating for children and families in Ohio!

Colorado

Colorado has three CRPs, which are required by Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) legislation. The Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force, the Child Fatality Review Team, and the Institutional Abuse Review Team each represent a CRP for Colorado. Each CRP provides a written annual report that is included in the annual CAPTA report and an appendix to the Annual Program and Service Report. Colorado Children's Alliance Funds were awarded to train forensic interviewers using the Colorado model for forensic interviewing. Training is provided to forensic interviewers onsite at a Children Advocacy Center (CAC), to caseworkers in parts of the state where there is not a dedicated CAC, and to any team member (law enforcement and human services caseworkers) who would benefit from the training. The training is provided in three parts. Training has been provided to nine people for Block I, six people for Block II, and nine people for Block III. During this funding period, there have been five forensic interview trainings with nine participants in each training. The plan is to provide Block III training two more times, Block II once more, and Block I once more before the end of the grant. This project aligned with CAPTA Section 107(e)(1) (A) and Colorado CJA Recommendations #2, #4, and #5.

Kentucky

Kentucky's CRP continues to grow across the state throughout its regions. Due to COVID-19, many of the activities that CRPs had planned for this state fiscal year were changed last minute, to which panel members adapted tremendously. With help from the University of Kentucky, resource fairs, meetings, and conferences were able to be held virtually for members and the community (foster parents, child protection employees, caregivers, etc.) to view, so their hard work was not put on hold. The diverse work these panels continue to do for the state and community is truly commendable.

Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia has three CRPs as part of its federal CAPTA plan: the Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee of the Family and Children's Trust Fund; the State Child Fatality Review Team; and the CJA/ Court Appointed Special Advocate Committee. The CRPs review specific child CPS practices and cases to monitor and evaluate a variety of program-specific components

of Virginia's child welfare system. The panels are comprised of members who broadly represent diverse facets of the Commonwealth, including public and private sector child welfare leaders. Each panel submits annual recommendations, which help guide and inform CPS practices across the Commonwealth.

North Dakota

"Citizen service is the very American idea that we meet our challenges not as isolated individuals but as members of a true community, with all of us working together. Our mission is nothing less than to spark a renewed sense of obligation, a new sense of duty, a new season of service."

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

The North Dakota Child Fatality Review Panel, as described in Section IV "Citizen Review Panel," serves as the state's CRP as allowed by CAPTA Section 106(c). The North Dakota Child Fatality Review Panel reviews the deaths of all children who receive a North Dakota death certificate, including but not limited to child deaths that occur as a result of child abuse or neglect. These retroactive records reviews also include reviews of child abuse and neglect near deaths. Both types of reviews take place quarterly. The timeline for publication of data reports does become quite lengthy—particularly in cases where criminal charges are pending—due to delays in receiving records for review until after prosecution is complete. There are also limited data resources available to the program. The Child Fatality Review Panel continues to explore strategies to shorten the timeframe between the case reviews and publication of the data. The North Dakota Child Fatality Review Panel provides case-level analysis of system functioning in the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases. The Child Fatality Review Panel data report for 2015 and 2016 has been completed and is posted to the state website: <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/cfs/child-fatality-report-2015-2016.pdf>

Tennessee

Tennessee's four CRPs met in July to determine their area of focus for 2020–2021. The focus for all four CRPs

is on improving outcomes for older youth in foster care. Since 2017, approximately 20 current and former foster youth have been interviewed about their experiences in care and ideas for improving the CPS system. Three former foster youth were recruited in July to serve on one panel to help inform evaluation and work of the panel. Each CRP receives assistance and staff support from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, the lead state agency overseeing CPS and child welfare reform. The staff support also includes representatives from the Independent Living program. In addition, one panel's focus includes assessing the communication between child welfare workers and service providers, specifically domestic violence and mental health agencies, regarding the referral process, delivery of services, and outcome of services.

Utah

Utah's Child Welfare Improvement Council (CWIC) serves in multiple capacities: it acts as one of Utah's statewide CRPs, provides general child welfare oversight, and guides the state on primary prevention priorities. CWIC liaises with Utah's five regional Quality Improvement Councils (QICs) that also serve as regional CRPs. Dan Rich (CPS Administrator) and Trisha Reynolds (Prevention Administrator) are both responsible for various pieces of CWIC's work, and as both are new to their positions in 2020, they are working hard to learn their roles and how the CWIC and QICs are operating. They recently identified some areas where CWIC and the QICs need more support and guidance from the Division of Child and Family Services and will be meeting with the various chairs to provide that support and training. They are also working on improving CWIC membership, as some key roles are currently not filled (e.g., a parent leader, law enforcement, Native American representation, etc.).

Nebraska

The Nebraska young adult CRP wrapped up its year in September with recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services focused on racial disparity in state systems and mental health practices for young people. They reviewed the categories of racial identification for data collection and recommended several changes be made, including adding a Middle Eastern category. They also developed mental health information to distribute to youth in care to help them take more control of their mental health. The parent

and caregiver CRP worked this year in the community of Schuyler, Nebraska. They made recommendations on how community members could build trust in governmental workers and how the community could better make new arrivals aware of available services.

Kansas

Kansas has three CAPTA CRPs: Intake to Petition, Custody to Transition, and the State Child Death Review Board. All three panels joined together virtually in August 2020 for their annual retreat and strategic planning meeting and are currently working to organize priorities for the coming year. Kansas CRPs have been actively working to compile resources for families impacted by the pandemic. Likewise, several of the state's CJA grantees have experienced disruption in their service delivery related to COVID-19; therefore, panel members are working with them to find alternative solutions so they may continue their outreach. The State Child Death Review Board report was released in October 2020, while the other two panels continue to examine areas of improvement and develop recommendations for improving the state's child welfare system.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia CRP evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of District government agencies involved in child protection as well as neighborhood-based services provided by organizations under contract with the local child protection agency, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). The CRP has two major working groups that focus on legislative concerns and community outreach efforts. The parameters for each group are to engage in evidence-based research, best-practice services, and critical policy issues. The CRP recently completed a review of CFSA in-home services and is currently exploring the work involved with youth aging out of foster care as well as their status.

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

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UNKNOWN



NATIONAL CRP SUPPORT THROUGH THE CENTER FOR STATES

The Center for States is part of the Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative. Its purpose is to help agencies build their capacities to improve child welfare practice and achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families.

The Center for States, through the leadership of Dr. Blake Jones from the University of Kentucky, will be facilitating a number of knowledge and skills events in the coming year for CRPs nationally. Dr. Jones has been known as a leader in the field for the past 20 years, and he will be available to assist states in leveraging their CRPs to develop best practices.

The Center for States hosts a listserv for the general CRP population, as well as a specific listserv for CRP coordinators. To join either listserv, please email Blake Jones at Blake.Jones@uky.edu or Kathy Simms at Kathy.Simms@icf.com.

On the next page is a tentative monthly schedule of interactive discussions and webinars planned for 2021(dates TBD).

MAINE DEVELOPS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CRP

On September 11, 2020, Dr. Blake Jones met with the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Board to develop a strategic plan for the coming year. The day was spent reviewing best practices for CRPs and forming working teams.

The Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel is a multi-disciplinary task force comprised of individuals from selected disciplines involved in handling child abuse and neglect cases. The panel publishes information on child abuse and neglect, provides training, develops necessary resources, and creates awareness. Its mission is to enhance the knowledge and skills of professionals who intervene in child abuse and neglect.

January

CRP Coordinator Peer Group
(Focus: Coordinator sharing of plans for 2021)

February

CRP Coordinator Peer Group
(Focus: Volunteer management and recruitment)

March

National CRP Webinar
(Focus: State showcase of a best practice)

April

CRP Coordinator Peer Group
(Focus: Writing reports)

May

CRP Coordinator Peer Group
(Focus: Using data)

June

National CRP Webinar
(Focus: In conjunction with the national conference [tentative])

July

Nothing scheduled

August

CRP Coordinator Peer Group
(Focus: Communicating with CPS)

September

National CRP Webinar
(Focus: Father engagement in case planning)